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Our last stop was outside Mambasa, where the local administrator in a fit of well-meaning but not very far-seeing zeal was "liberating" the Pygmies from the villagers. He did this by cutting down clearings along the roadside and setting up villages for the Pygmies to live in, so that they could cultivate plantations that would provide additional crops for the government to collect and market. Kenge was immensely amused at the thought of being liberated. He said the Pygmies would still go to the Negro villages. Why should they work on their own plantations when they could steal from real villagers?

We accompanied the administrator, a fat and jovial man, hospitable and friendly, who genuinely liked the Pygmies. But he could not be made to believe that what he was doing was wrong. He had called various groups of Pygmies down to the clearings and talked to each group, explaining that the government would supply them with all the necessary tools for cultivation and give them the seeds to plant. In time, each Pygmy village would have a baraza, like the Negro villages, and a schoolhouse, and the important ones would have their own dispensaries. He then asked in a democratic way if they wanted to come and join the plan. They all shouted yes, to a man, and the administrator turned to me with a victorious smile of pride. He then commanded the villagers he had brought with him to distribute beans to each Pygmy, with instructions as to how and where to plant them. The Pygmies all lined up, and as soon as each had received his share he rejoined the end of the line. When they were caught out and taken off the line to their allotments to plant the beans, they listened gravely and began to work. Half an hour later most of the beans were being cooked for lunch.

The plan was doomed to failure for several reasons. For one, the Pygmies are not able to stand the direct sunlight and become ill outside the shade of the forest. They also become ill because they have no resistance, as the villagers have, to the kinds of disease they are open to in a sedentary life. Water which the villager can drink with

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impunity gives severe stomach disorder to the Pygmy, who is used to the fresh clean water of forest streams. Flies and mosquitoes carry germs unknown to him in his natural home. But above all, his entire code of behavior and thought is geared to his nomadic forest life: to bring him to a settled life in a village is to ask him overnight to abandon one way of life, a way he has lived for thousands of years, and adopt another. Where the Pygmies did make the attempt there was complete moral as well as physical disintegration. Not long ago a Belgian friend from the Congo told me that the day before he had left, on one small "model plantation" where the Pygmies were being liberated, twenty-nine had died in one day from sunstroke.

I spoke about the plan to many Pygmies, and when Kenge got back to Epulu he talked as much about it as about anything else that he had seen on his journey to the outside world. Old Moke summed up the attitude that I had found everywhere. "The forest is our home; when we leave the forest, or when the forest dies, we shall die. We are the people of the forest."